

BIG RED

Continued from C-1 1986 25 June

cialize in different tricks. One runs at command (he is released off screen and blazes past the camera only to stop when he reaches the other horses, who are stationed out of lens range.)

Then there are another two horses that fight the bear. They specialize in standing on their back legs and flailing their hooves.

In the movie, because of the camera angle, it will look as if the bear and horse are up close and doing combat. They aren't. It's a man's hand in the bear arm that comes up and claws the horse, leaving bloody streaks (which are really makeup).

You are not likely to see a scene like this in nature, either. "A horse is an animal of flight," says Peterson. No horse in his right mind would have stayed around to duke it out with Bart, unless, as was the case here, he was trained to do it and he was also held in place by two ropes (made out of a transparent fiber, so that they won't be noticed in the film).

As an extra precaution the horse and the bear each stood inside a circle of electrical wire. They would have received a shock if they had tried to attack in earnest, or tried to escape.

For horse trainers Rex Peterson and Corky Randall, the past two weeks spent filming near Heber City was just another job. The two travel all over the world with their horses, and usually spend much longer on location.

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For example, they spent three months in Italy, Toronto and Santa Anna when they worked on the movie, "The Black Stallion," and they spent another three months on the sequel. (Incidentally, there were three horses playing the part of The Black Stallion and only one was black. The other two were dyed black. Yes, dyed. Sigh.)

This was the first time Peterson and Randall or their horses had ever worked with a bear.

"We needed much longer to train," says Peterson. "We could have had the animals much closer together — actually had the bear wrestle a horse — if we'd had the time we needed. We should have had that bear brought out to our place months ago so they could have been getting used to each other." The film's director, Burt Kennedy, was presumably satisfied with the scene they shot; Peterson is more of a perfectionist and says, repeatedly, that he wishes they had trained for three months, instead of two weeks, for this movie.

Seus didn't feel the lack of practice time quite so acutely. He had his own horse with which to train Bart the bear. "I took a lot of time working with them, not allowing the bear to intimidate my horse," says Seus.

According to Seus it is a well-known fact that bears are very intelligent, much smarter than horses, right next to the large apes in thinking capacity. But they do tend to be a bit aggressive. Especially during the mating season. And at other times as well, because, after all "every animal likes to enlarge his territory. Then, too, bears feed on demand." Which means that Bart really wanted to eat Big Red because he didn't know when another meal (or at least another meal that big) would be coming his way.

Seus understands Bart. He has had him for nearly 10 years, since the cub was only five weeks old. "I am probably a frustrated biologist," he says of his training methods that are a mixture of positive reinforcement (food, scratching, bear hugs) and quick reprisal for bad behavior. When he was a cub, Seus would cuff him, just as a mother bear would do to her naughty baby. But now it takes something more on the order of a tree limb to influence Bart. "No matter what these so-called 'animal lovers' might think," says Seus, "you cannot correct an animal of this size with a rolled newspaper."

